

VZCZCXRO1125
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI
DE RUEHCI #0355/01 3241314
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201314Z NOV 07
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1772
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1673
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 0755
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0760
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2168

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KOLKATA 000355

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S/ES-O-CMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: KOLKATA'S CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR CYCLONE SIDR: LESSONS
LEARNED

REF: A) KOLKATA 0348 B) KOLKATA 0349

11. (SBU) Summary: On November 16, cyclone Sidr had only a moderate impact on West Bengal and Kolkata's consular district. However, to retain information on lessons learned regarding Post's planning and preparations for the cyclone, the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) and other post personnel conducted an After Action Review (AAR). Post's AAR found that Post had responded well to possible cyclone damage. However, some key points were discussed, to include: implementing long-term measures to address possible flood risks; retaining and updating key consular contact lists; regular testing of communication equipment; and close and regular interaction with important contacts. In addition, Post found that updating the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is very difficult due to the slow processing time and cumbersome interface of the Computerized Emergency Planning Application (CEPA), rendering the EAP unusable during a crisis. End Summary.

MANAGEMENT

12. (U) November 14-15, Post was initially at risk to cyclone Sidr as it was tracking to the north coast of the Bay of Bengal and close to Kolkata. Post management and facilities personnel responded by preparing for possible flooding, high winds, power and telephone outages. Key lessons learned from this process included that materials, equipment and trash around the Post facilities need to be kept to an essential minimum at all times. Time was required to dispose of contractor project waste and other loose materials around the buildings that could have posed a hazard in high winds. Regular inspections should be conducted of the consulate grounds for exposed items, equipment and trash.

3 (U) To prevent flooding, Post will look at installing additional pumps, barriers and for the on going Consular Improvement Projects (CIP), will mount electrical equipment and computer items on walls or in raised areas.

14. (U) Safehaven areas should store only essential equipment and no extraneous items.

CONSULAR

15. (U) Consular staff were in contact with institutions, hotels and other organizations where AmCits were likely present in order to provide Warden messages and to obtain updated details of AmCits in district. Consular staff found that it was important to have a comprehensive and updated list of key

contacts.

¶6. (U) Dissemination of Warden messages was by e-mail and through the media. Use of e-mail was problematic as some e-mail accounts had SPAM filters that may have blocked the Warden messages. Post will alert Wardens to check their SPAM filters and will consider possibly alerting individuals to disseminated Warden messages by sending a mass SMS to cell phone accounts.

¶7. (U) Consular staff were not familiar with some equipment that they would be expected to use in a case of an emergency, such as satellite telephones, digital cameras and lap top computers. Post will conduct an offsite training drill with consular staff to simulate a field emergency requiring the set-up of emergency site equipment.

COMMUNICATIONS

¶8. (U) Post conducts weekly radio checks with the emergency radio network. However, some staff were still unfamiliar with using the radios and will need to be continually drilled on the radios. In addition, training on satellite telephones is required.

¶9. (U) Communication and computer equipment on ground floor areas that may be subject to flooding should be mounted off the floor.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

¶10. (U) Pol/Econ staff were in contact with local disaster
KOLKATA 00000355 002 OF 002

management and government officials. Pol/Econ staff found that it was critical to meet with the key disaster planners in person for developing a closer working relationship. Local government officials were generally unwilling to provide information over the telephone.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

¶11. (U) To ensure the widest distribution of the Department approved Warden notices, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) was very effective in disseminating the information to local media. PAS also coordinated with PAS New Delhi to craft a unified, country-wide message. Additionally, PAS had prepared talking points to respond to media inquiries.

EPA SOFTWARE CUMBERSOME

¶12. (SBU) Post found that the new EAP software is slow and cumbersome to use. During the crisis planning and preparation, Post had to use Word files to compile and update lists of names.

Until the CEPA software can be improved to facilitate ease of input and to update quickly, the EAP will be nearly impossible to use during a crisis.

JARDINE